



Police
Remuneration Review Body

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Sixth Report on Northern Ireland 2020

Chair: Anita Bharucha

Police Remuneration Review Body

Terms of reference¹

The Police Remuneration Review Body² (PRRB) provides independent recommendations to the Home Secretary and to the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice on the hours of duty, leave, pay, allowances and the issue, use and return of police clothing, personal equipment and accoutrements for police officers of or below the rank of chief superintendent and police cadets in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland respectively.

In reaching its recommendations the Review Body must have regard to the following considerations:

- the particular frontline role and nature of the office of constable;
- the prohibition on police officers being members of a trade union or withdrawing their labour;
- the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified officers;
- the funds available to the Home Office, as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits, and the representations of police and crime commissioners and the Northern Ireland Policing Board in respect of local funding issues;
- the Government's wider public sector pay policy;
- the Government's policies for improving public services;
- the work of the College of Policing;
- the work of police and crime commissioners;
- relevant legal obligations on the police service in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, including anti-discrimination legislation regarding age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief and disability;
- the operating environments of different forces, including consideration of the specific challenges of policing in rural or large metropolitan areas and in Northern Ireland, as well as any specific national roles which forces may have;
- any relevant legislative changes to employment law which do not automatically apply to police officers;
- that the remuneration of the remit group relates coherently to that of chief officer ranks.

The Review Body should also be required to consider other specific issues as directed by the Home Secretary and/or the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice, and should be required to take account of the economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, professional representatives and others.

¹ The terms of reference were set by the Home Office following a public consultation – Implementing a Police Pay Review Body – The Government's Response, April 2013.

² The Police Remuneration Review Body was established by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and became operational in September 2014.

It is also important for the Review Body to be mindful of developments in police officer pensions to ensure that there is a consistent, strategic and holistic approach to police pay and conditions.

Reports and recommendations of the Review Body should be submitted to the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice (Northern Ireland), and they should be published.

Members³ of the Review Body⁴

Anita Bharucha (Chair)
Andrew Bliss QPM
Professor Monojit Chatterji
Richard Childs QPM
Kathryn Gray
Mark Hoble
Patrick McCartan CBE
Trevor Reaney CBE

The secretariat is provided by the Office of Manpower Economics.

³ Members of the Review Body are appointed through an open competition adhering to the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578090/Public_Appointments_Governance_Code_.pdf. [Accessed on 18 June 2020]

⁴ Elizabeth Bell resigned from the Review Body in May 2020

POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY

Northern Ireland Sixth Report 2020

Executive Summary

Our 2020/21 recommendations (from 1 September 2020):

- **A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks.**
- **The Chief Constable of Northern Ireland should be granted the same discretion as chief constables in England and Wales regarding the starting salaries of constables.**
- **Removal of the lowest point on the sergeants' pay scale.**
- **An increase of 2.5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance.**
- **The current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment should not increase and the parties submit proposals to us next year on suitable alternative arrangements.**
- **Dog Handlers' Allowance should increase by 2.5%.**
- **On-call Allowance should be extended to the superintending ranks in Northern Ireland.**
- **The parties conduct a comprehensive review of police officer allowances in Northern Ireland within the next twelve months.**

Introduction

1. The Police Remuneration Review Body became operational in September 2014 and our terms of reference relate to the pay and certain other conditions of service of police officers in Northern Ireland. Our remit does not include police staff or other groups.
2. This is our Sixth Report on police officers in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). As at 1 May 2020, there were 6,920 police officers in the PSNI on a full-time equivalent basis.
3. The level of demand on the PSNI is high, increasingly complex and resource intensive and the security threat remains 'SEVERE', with officers placed at risk of terrorist attack.

Response to last year's report

4. Our Fifth Report was submitted to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice in May 2019. The Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland responded to this on 20 February 2020 by accepting in full our recommendations for the federated and superintending ranks. At the time of writing, a response was still awaited on the 2019/20 pay award for chief police officers in the PSNI. (Paragraphs 1.2 to 1.7)

Our remit

5. Our Sixth Report contains our recommendations for 2020/21 for police officer pay and certain allowances for all police ranks in Northern Ireland. The remit letter from the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland asked for recommendations on:
 - the application of any pay award for all ranks, including the starting salary for student officers;
 - whether any increase should be applied to the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) and other allowances, including those for on-call (federated ranks) and dog handlers;
 - whether the superintending ranks should have access to targeted payments, bonuses and/or payment for on-call duties; and
 - the future of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) scheme following consideration of proposals submitted by stakeholders.(Paragraph 1.8)

The environment for this year's report

6. Our report this year has been completed against the background of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The work of police officers is important, difficult, complex and sometimes dangerous in the ordinary course of events. COVID-19 had an immediate impact on the police and meant they had to respond quickly to a new threat. This added further pressures and personal risk to their challenging role as one of the groups working on the frontline at this time. Consequently, we would like to acknowledge our remit group for their particular contribution this year and express our gratitude to all the

parties for continuing to engage with us in oral evidence sessions that had to be conducted entirely by remote means this time. (Paragraphs 1.12 to 1.15)

7. The UK has now left the European Union (EU) but its relationship remains to be settled. We note the future challenge for the PSNI in policing the only land border between the UK and Europe under EU Exit and would like to learn more in evidence next year about the impact of EU Exit on the PSNI. (Paragraph 1.16)

Our analysis of the 2020/21 evidence

8. The main points which we noted from the evidence are:
 - *Policing environment* – There are high levels of demand on police officers and the Northern Ireland security situation remains ‘SEVERE’, with terrorist activity continuing to place police officers at risk of attack. (Paragraph 2.18)
 - *Sickness levels* – We are concerned at the increase in the number of PSNI officers taking sick leave between April and November 2019 compared with the same period the previous year, particularly in the context of the high levels of sickness absence routinely reported to us. We note that the high levels of sickness absence found in the PSNI were attributed by the Northern Ireland Audit Office to officer under-resourcing since 2010 and the coincidence of significant budget cuts with increasing demand. We will be interested to see the approach in the PSNI’s People and Culture Strategy 2020-2025 to this issue. (Paragraph 2.107)
 - *Core pay parity and broad consistency* – We uphold the principle of parity with England and Wales on core pay. We also uphold the principle of broad consistency on allowances but at the same time require a sound justification for any deviation from allowances in England and Wales. (Paragraphs 2.34 and 2.35)
 - *Public sector pay policies and affordability* – The Northern Ireland Audit Office said that the long-term resilience of the PSNI had been put at risk by the reduction in the size of its workforce to meet immediate financial pressures. It concerns us that the PSNI still lacks the budgetary levers required to develop long-term plans and that this constrains its ability to

drive change in a strategic, holistic and sustainable way. In addition, we note that while publication of the Northern Ireland public sector pay policy for 2020/21 was signalled in our remit letter it failed to emerge in time. (Paragraphs 2.51 and 2.52)

- *Economy and labour market* – We are finalising this report in a rapidly changing economic environment. The length and magnitude of the effects of COVID-19 are uncertain and it will take some time before official data begin to show the full effects. We note that the evidence on the affordability of pay awards set out in departmental evidence submissions remained extant. We note that gross domestic product in the three months to March 2020 was 2.0% lower than the previous three months. In the year to April 2020, the Consumer Prices Index was at 0.8%. In the first quarter of 2020 the unemployment rate was 2.4% in Northern Ireland and 3.9% in the UK. Median pay settlements ranged from 2.4% to 2.5% in the three months to March 2020. (Paragraphs 2.61 and 2.62)
- *Police officer earnings* – Police officers in Northern Ireland have higher median full-time gross annual earnings compared with counterparts in England and Wales, approximately £47,600 compared with £41,300 respectively in the 2018/19 financial year; this was primarily driven by NITA and higher amounts of overtime⁵. (Paragraph 2.74)
- *PSNI workforce, recruitment and retention* – At the time of writing it was not known whether the plan under New Decade New Approach to increase the number of officers in the PSNI by around 600 to 7,500 would receive the necessary funding. This uncertainty is of particular concern to us in the context of the long-term decline in the size of our Northern Ireland remit group at a time of high and increasingly complex demand. Moreover, officer outflow levels are expected to remain high, with a significant portion of the workforce reaching retirement age in the next few years. (Paragraphs 2.96 and 2.97)
- *Morale and motivation* – We have taken into account the importance to effective policing of police officers’ goodwill and discretionary effort and

⁵ CRTP has been retained in Northern Ireland but not England and Wales. However, this has been offset in part by the introduction of the Unsocial Hours Allowance in England and Wales.

suitable motivation. Last year we asked the PSNI to share with us the results of the third workforce survey that it was planning for later in 2019. While it did carry out the survey, it has not shared the results with us. We are still keen to receive them and any future survey results. (Paragraphs 2.106 and 2.107)

Pay proposals and recommendations for 2020/21

9. The key factors we took into account in reaching our main pay uplift recommendation were:
 - Our principles on parity with England and Wales on core pay and broad consistency on allowances and our requirement for a sound justification for any deviation from those allowances. We have applied these principles to each of our pay and allowance recommendations this year. (Paragraph 3.10)
 - The evidence of high demand on the police and an increasingly complex and resource-intensive caseload. (Paragraph 3.11)
 - The nature of police work which is important, difficult, complex and sometimes dangerous. (Paragraph 3.12)
 - Uncertainty over funding for the plan in New Decade New Approach to increase the number of PSNI officers to 7,500. (Paragraph 3.13)
 - The importance to effective policing of officers' goodwill, discretionary effort and suitable motivation. (Paragraph 3.14)
 - The evidence provided on affordability. (Paragraph 3.15)
 - The impact on our remit group of the real-term 20% reduction in the PSNI budget over the last 10 years. (Paragraph 3.16)
 - The state of the wider economy, including the level of pay settlements and the cost of living. (Paragraph 3.17)

10. While COVID-19 continued to change the context for this report as we prepared it, we considered our remit in the usual way, including by focusing on longer-term trends in the data and information relevant to our evidence-based process. (Paragraph 3.18)

11. For the third time, we have been asked to provide recommendations on the pay of chief police officers in Northern Ireland. These officers are the most senior leaders in policing and they should be rewarded appropriately for the very important work they do. We are also reluctant to recommend a pay uplift for this group that differs from the award for the other police ranks unless compelling reasons exist. (Paragraph 3.19)
12. Taking these factors together, **we recommend a consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks from 1 September 2020.** (Paragraph 3.20)
13. Mindful of the flexibility available on police starting salaries in England and Wales, **we recommend that the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland should be granted the same discretion as chief constables in England and Wales regarding the starting salaries of constables.** (Paragraphs 3.28 to 3.32)
14. **We also recommend the removal of the lowest point on the sergeants' pay scale from 1 September 2020.** (Paragraph 3.34)
15. We again recommend that the **NITA** is increased in line with the annual pay award. **We therefore recommend a 2.5% increase from 1 September 2020.** (Paragraph 3.45)
16. We note the continued tension between retaining CRTP and the rationale for core pay parity and broad consistency on allowances. **We therefore recommend that the current level of CRTP should not increase and that the parties submit proposals to us next year on suitable alternative arrangements.** (Paragraphs 3.57 and 3.58)
17. **We also recommend that the Dog Handlers' Allowance is increased by 2.5% from 1 September 2020** in line with the annual pay award. (Paragraph 3.61)

18. **In addition, we recommend that the On-call Allowance should be extended to the superintending ranks in Northern Ireland.** This is in line with England and Wales. (Paragraph 3.73)
19. **Finally, we recommend that the parties conduct a comprehensive review of police officer allowances in Northern Ireland within the next twelve months.** (Paragraphs 3.91 and 3.92)

Forward Look

20. We note that the current economic outlook means that this year's pay recommendation will be a real-term increase for officers in our remit group and assess that this is justified given the evidence presented to us and the demand, complexity and level of risk and responsibility placed on the police. We recognise that the environment for next year's review will be influenced by a number of factors. (Paragraph 4.2)
21. The longer-term implications of COVID-19 for the police service and its workforce are uncertain. We will seek to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on our remit group as data become available. We will also be interested to receive evidence on the impact of the UK exiting the European Union on policing in Northern Ireland. (Paragraphs 4.3 to 4.5)
22. We would be interested in hearing the views of the Minister of Justice on how the PSNI might mitigate the impact of the annual funding cycle on its ability to develop long-term plans. (Paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7)
23. We have stated our principles on parity with England and Wales on core pay and broad consistency on allowances and the requirement for a sound justification for any deviation from those allowances. We will continue to review the evidence we receive against those principles as part of our future reports. (Paragraph 4.8)
24. We thank the parties for the evidence they have provided this year, particularly in view of the pressures arising from COVID-19. We would encourage the continued, and where possible enhanced, provision of data in

a number of areas, including the age profile of recruits and an analysis of sickness absence levels. (Paragraph 4.9)

25. We are also interested in receiving further information on the Chief Constable's plans for workforce and pay reform in the PSNI, such as the PSNI People and Culture Strategy 2020-2025. These plans for the PSNI may diverge from the workforce and pay reform plans in England and Wales. (Paragraph 4.10)
26. We hope that PSNI police officers are able to receive their pay award on time in 2020/21 and that publication of our report will not be subject to delay. (Paragraph 4.11)
27. We also understand at the time of writing that the 2019/20 pay award for PSNI chief police officers remained unapproved. We hope that this matter is resolved soon. (Paragraph 4.12)

Anita Bharucha (Chair)
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